

For Immediate Release

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Nebraska's SNAP National Ranking Moves Up 20 Spots Federal Report Confirms Continuous Progress Since 2013 Low

Lincoln—The ranking of ACCESSNebraska's timeliness in processing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications climbed to 32nd nationally for January-June 2015 compared to the previous U.S.D.A. quarterly report ranking of 39th, according to Courtney Phillips, CEO of the Department of Health and Human Services. Nebraska's lowest national ranking was 52nd out of 53 jurisdictions at the end of the federal fiscal year in September 2013.

"We are excited with every report to see that we're making direct improvements for our clients by providing assistance more quickly. We continue to work to improve our performance as there is much more to accomplish, but we're seeing positive results from our hard work thus far," Phillips said. "From our improvement in the timely processing of applications, to shorter call wait times, ACCESSNebraska continues to make progress in better serving Nebraskans."

Coupled with the improved ranking, Phillips said the average time to process applications in November was 11.5 days, compared to the peak in November 2014 of 40.9 days.

"Recently, a client sent an email praising a worker at ACCESSNebraska and thanked her for her kind and prompt processing of her application," Phillips said. "She said she is struggling with providing food for her children and called the help she received a blessing. Our focus in every effort we make to improve our service through ACCESSNebraska is to provide timely and efficient services."

In addition, call wait times for Economic Assistance were in the targeted five-minute range for three continuous months with an average wait time of 5 minutes 26 seconds in November, down from August call wait times of 14 minutes 10 seconds.

In the U.S.D.A.'s January-June 2015 report, 89.08 percent of applications received timely processing, while the national average was 90.10 percent. The report includes a margin of error of plus or minus 4.63 percent for Nebraska, making the high end of the state's scale over 93 percent.

Phillips attributed the ongoing improvement in services to:

- The hard work of staff and their focus on clients.
- Changes made as a result of daily Economic Development staff and weekly cross-divisional meetings led by Felix Davidson, Governor Pete Ricketts' chief operating officer;
- Assistance from a consultant provided by the U.S. Food and Nutrition Service (FNS); and
- A positive working relationship with the regional FNS office.

Monthly updates on the performance of SNAP and Economic Assistance are available on the DHHS website: accessnebraska.gov by clicking on Key Performance Metrics.